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DAKAR PASS RAO, DAO, AND ODC

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TAGS: [PROG](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [PINS](#) [CASC](#) [ASEC](#) [KMCA](#) [GA](#) [SG](#)

SUBJECT: THE GAMBIA: FOLLOW-UP DEMARCHE ON DETAINEES

REF: A. BANJUL 222 AND PREVIOUS

[1](#)B. BANJUL 212

Classified By: AMBASSADOR JOSEPH STAFFORD, REASON 1.4 (B AND D)

FOLLOW-UP DEMARCHE ON DETAINEES, ACCESS TO AMCIT

[1](#)1. (C) Ambassador met April 13 with Foreign Minister's deputy, William Joof, to reiterate our concern over authorities' reported abuses following the March 21 aborted coup plot and to reiterate our request for prompt access to detained American citizen (dual national) Tamsir Jasseh (ref a). (NOTE: Ambassador requested meeting with Joof rather than his nominal superior, Formin Lamin Kaba Bajo, as Joof is more knowledgeable and influential with President Jammeh than the Minister. END NOTE) Reiterating points previously made to the senior presidential adviser, Secretary General Mambury Njie (ref b), Ambassador emphasized our concern over the ongoing reports of mistreatment of detainees suspected of involvement in the failed plot.

[1](#)2. (C) Ambassador urged the GOTG leadership to put a stop to abuses, allow detainees access to lawyers and family members, and ensure due process for the accused. He also urged cooperation with concerned international organizations such as the ICRC. (NOTE: ICRC rep told us April 12 that GOTG had so far refused his request to visit detainees; at ICRC rep's request, Ambassador refrained from telling Joof of ICRC's contact with Embassy. END NOTE) Ambassador also noted the ongoing closure of the journal, "Independent" and detention of its General Manager and Editor-in-Chief, urging that the paper be allowed to resume publication and that any judicial proceedings against its personnel be open and transparent. He also noted the repercussions of this latest negative trend in the GOTG's human rights record for its eligibility for the Millenium Challenge Account (MCA) program.

[1](#)3. (C) Joof said he would ensure that Jammeh was aware of our concerns and took Ambassador's point that the GOTG's ongoing silence over its investigation into the failed plot and status of detainees only added fuel to rumors of, inter alia, secret executions. Regarding our repeated requests to see Amcit Jasseh, Joof said he would continue to raise this with security authorities, but noted that Jasseh also had Gambian nationality and remarked, "we consider that he was acting as a Gambian, not an American, in participating in the coup attempt." Joof added that Jasseh was regarded as a major figure in the failed plot and that access to him, as for other detainees, might not be granted so long as interrogations were continuing. In response, Ambassador emphasized that, with the passage of time since Jasseh's March 24 detention, our prompt access to him was all the more important.

COMMENT

14. (C) Since our April 10 update on the failed coup plot's aftermath, we have been unable to obtain any updated information on detainees' status, as our official sources have professed ignorance on this score and our private sources have no direct knowledge regarding the detainees. There is likewise no new information available on the "Independent" and prospects for its resuming publication. Meanwhile, such rumors as that of the secret execution of detainees that had escaped, according to the GOTG, continue to circulate. At this juncture, we conclude that Jammeh's determination to ferret out all involved in any way in the coup plot outweighs concern over the damage to his image at home as well as abroad over the ongoing reports of abuse of detainees and move against the "Independent." END COMMENT.
STAFFORD